



To: Students, staff, partners, parents and caregivers
From: Sharon Jones, Chair, Board of Directors, Southwest Early College High School
RE: Updates concerning the status of SECHS
Date: September 24, 2019

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Directors and school administration to update you on several issues regarding the status of our school.

1- Later today there will be an opportunity for public comment at the regularly scheduled Shelby County Schools Board of Education business meeting. The meeting is scheduled to begin at 5:30pm, at the Frances E. Coe Auditorium 160 South Hollywood Street, Memphis, Tennessee, 38112. There will be a chance at the beginning for people to sign up and speak (for up to three minutes) about their experiences with the school. **We hope that many of you can take this opportunity to attend and speak about the school's work and your own experiences.**

This part of the meeting is intended to provide information for the Shelby County School District as they assess their support for Southwest Early College High School going forward. Your voice is important. Please make an effort to attend and to bring your family members, especially students of our school.

2- On October 29, 2019 the SCS Board of Education will meet to decide and vote upon the future of our school, whether or not it will receive permission to remain open after this current 2019-20 school year. We are optimistic, but once again, an important factor in **our future will be the strength and positivity of your voices prior to October 29th.**

You can also direct your comments and opinions by phone to the Superintendent's office directly by phone at 901-416-5444 or by email at superintendent@scsk12.org, as well as emailing or handwriting notes to SCS school board members. Their email addresses can be found at <http://www.scsk12.org/board/maps?PID=654>.

SCS has asked our school to respond to questions and concerns, many of them anonymous, that surfaced over the past weeks, which we have done with full transparency and documentation. We have not been informed by SCS with reasonable specificity about concerns or violations of statute or charter that would threaten our ability to continue to operate, and we have retained legal counsel to further investigate the nature of the complaints and the legality of such actions as might impact the school's future operations.

3- The President of Southwest TN Community College, Dr. Tracy Hall, announced on September 19th, without notice to us, in a letter to her employees that the College would not continue to partner with or host us after this academic year. Our Board and administration have asked for specific reasons for this decision but have not received that information, nor were we



invited to meet and discuss concerns and points of view. We contend that we have addressed the few issues and concerns raised by the college and are both surprised and confused by this unexpected news, and we have been frustrated in our attempts to meet and problem-solve with college representatives in the spirit of a true partnership.

It is important that we extend our thanks to the many people associated with Southwest TN Community College who have been supportive friends and colleagues, who have helped to establish a positive working environment, who have reached out to serve our staff, families and students, and who have displayed the hallmarks of a true Early College partnership, intent on positive reciprocity and improvement in our collaboration. Our appreciation is heartfelt and such goodwill and effort have demonstrated for our students and families the value of this kind of educational collaboration. Yet, of late, we feel that spirit of partnership has not been extended by the college administration and that their recent negative communications have been somewhat surprising and have mischaracterized our openness to problem-solving and improvement, and have instead, taken a tone of blaming and complaint.

We fully realize that these developments may cause undue stress --foremost for our students and families, and to our staff. **We remain committed to providing the very best school experience for our students and families, and to making SECHS a place where students are well-known, are physically and intellectually safe, and where learning for them happens each and every day.** If you have questions, please call the school at 901-333-5681 and we will log and return any calls.

Sincerely,

Sharon Jones